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Statement of

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Administrator

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

before the

Senate Committee on

Aeronautical and Space Sciences

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

As requested, Chairman Floyd Thompson and the members of the Apollo 204 Review Board are here today with their final report which was submitted to me and sent to you on Sunday.

As I said yesterday before the House, the Apollo 204 mission was a part of a program to develop for the United States an advanced manned space flight capability. For the past six years in this program, we have been dealing with a large number of unknowns, as to the environment on lift-off and during acceleration into earth orbit, in the space environment between the earth and the moon, and on and around the moon. We have also been dealing with all the problems which must be met and overcome in a broadly based effort to develop, build and use very advanced machines over an extended time period and with the uncertainties of Congressional authorization and appropriation on an

annual basis. We have also been dealing with the difficult art of fitting together and adding strength to many of the economic, social, and political institutions of this nation. Our effort has been to not permit the USSR with its early start and rapid progress in manned space flight to preempt the powers which can derive from a predominant position in the area of manned space flight.

The difficulty NASA has had in bringing into play the strengths of over 20,000 contractors and over 400,000 men and women in industrial occupations has not permitted a clean-cut or static pattern that could be established in advance and adhered to without change. The capability the National Aeronautics and Space Administration has demonstrated in Project Mercury and in Project Gemini, flying 20 men in 20 months, and fully accomplishing the program objectives has not all been consumed in one Apollo fire. The experience gained in Mercury, Gemini, Ranger, Surveyor, Lunar Orbiter, Pioneer, Mariner, Tiros, Nimbus, Relay, Syncom, and many others is incorporated in the Apollo design and mission planning. Whatever our faults, we are an able-bodied team.

The Apollo Review Board, which you will hear today, has filed a report that includes many serious criticisms of both NASA and industry. We will take our part of the blame for what we have done or left undone, but I believe this committee can have confidence that NASA and its contractors have the capability to overcome every deficiency required to proceed to successfully fly the Apollo Saturn system and accomplish

its objectives.

The Apollo Review Board states in its preface that it was charged with the responsibility of reviewing the circumstances surrounding the accident, reporting its findings relating to the cause of the accident, and formulating recommendations so that inherent hazards are reduced to a minimum. The Board states that its function has been to search for error in the most complex research and development program ever undertaken. The Board has found error, but it has also found the capability within NASA and the Apollo team of contractors to overcome error. It has also found a basic strength of design, a competence of manufacturing and operational know-how which has led its chairman, Dr. Floyd Thompson, to state to me **Sunday night that he** believed the concepts and the basic design on which the Apollo system is based can be made to work in a reliable manner. I am here today to say that NASA is prepared to make it work reliably.

**Sunday night, just as I asked Dr. Thompson to tell me frankly what** he thought, I also asked Frank Borman if he felt that the deficiencies pointed to by the Board could be overcome in a manner that would give him confidence to fly the Apollo system. His answer was yes.

Mr. Chairman, if any man in this room wants to ask "for whom the Apollo tolls" I can tell him. It tolls for him and for me, as well as for Grissom, White and Chaffee. It tolls for every astronaut test pilot who will lose his life in the space simulated vacuum of a test chamber or the real vacuum of space. It tolls for every astronaut scientist who will lose his life on some lonely hill on the moon or Mars.

It tolls for government and industrial executives and legislators alike. It tolls for an open program continuously evaluated by opinion makers with little time for sober second thought-operating in the brilliant color and brutal glare of a real time world-wide mass media that moves with the speed of a TV camera from euphoria to exaggerated detail. In my view, NASA's senior officials and the members of your committee have a grave responsibility to work together to purge what is bad in the system, we together have created and supported. We have perhaps an even graver responsibility to so act as to preserve what is good and represents still, at this hour, a high point in all mankind's vision of a new day on earth because the rocket engine makes it possible, but just possible, to explore and use that vast and unlimited region that separates us from our sun and its other planets -- that region which we call space.

**Dr. Thompson and the Board are prepared to present their report.**